

New London County Historical Society

11 Blinman Street

SHAW MANSION

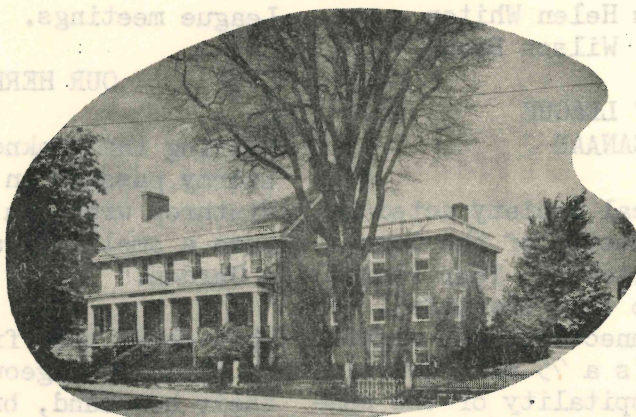
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TALK ON SOUND STEAMBOATS FEATURE OF ANNUAL MEETING

A little cloud of despair hung over the heads of the Executive Committee when they learned that the repairs to Bank Street would necessitate holding the annual meeting away from the Shaw Mansion or postponing it. Luckily the Lyman Allyn Museum was available. One hundred members attended the meeting there on the evening of 22 September and gave evidence of enjoying the program.

Mr. Freeman R. Hathaway's talk on "Steamboats of the Sound" was illustrated by nearly a hundred slides, and it revived fond memories in those who have enjoyed trips between New London and New York, Newport, Fishers Island, Block Island and other ports. Mr. Hathaway spiced his talk with anecdote, and his prodigious memory supplied details enough to satisfy the most exacting steamboat fan. The speaker brought with him many colorful prints and paintings of old water favorites which brightened several rooms.

A surprise feature of the evening was a short reel of colored motion pictures shown by Mr. George D. Garvey, which illustrated a tour of school children through the Mansion last May. The serious attention paid by the children to the exhibits was brought out in striking fashion by the pictures which were informally posed.

Mrs. Herbert G. Huntley and her committee ladies decorated the rooms beautifully with fall flowers and served refreshments during the informal social hour that ended the evening. Many expressed the wish that more frequent meetings could be held during the year. It seems important to meet more often, for there are many interesting topics to discuss, and there are many interesting people in the Society. Frequent meetings would help us all to get to know each other better!

OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY 1953-1954

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FALL MEETING OF LEAGUE HELD AT NEW CANAAN

The New Canaan Historical Society acted as host to the member societies of the Connecticut League on 17 October. Your representatives journeyed to this beautiful southwest corner of Connecticut the night before the meeting (it's a 75 mile drive) and experienced the hospitality of the spacious and venerable Silvermine Tavern. The meeting was held in the Congregational Church at New Canaan. After the business session the guests divided into three groups for prepared talks and discussion periods. Mr. Thomas E. Hall, Curator of the Gun Museum, Winchester Repeating Arms Company, spoke on the "Identification and Care of Guns." Mr. Stephen B. Hoyt of the host society described activities at New Canaan. Mr. Lyman talked about Historical Societies and their obligations to young people.

After a box lunch with coffee and dessert provided by the hosts, there were tours of New Canaan places of interest that highlighted the differences between the Little Red Schoolhouse and the 20th century modern school, and a beautifully restored 18th century home and the Glass House of Tomorrow, designed and built by the Director of Architecture and Design of the Museum of Modern Art of New York. A trip to the Historical Society's ultra-modern quarters in the Public Library ended a delightful day.

These League meetings remind us periodically of the wonderful stimulus that is provided by association with others who possess similar interests. Informative papers and spirited discussions promote interest in work that sometimes lags for want of community effort. Trips to various sections of our beautiful state do much to clarify our knowledge of places. In speaking to people about this meeting, your representatives were interested to learn that many people confuse New Canaan with the town of Canaan way up in the northwest Connecticut hills!

Here's a note for your calendar. The winter meeting of the League will be held on 16 January at New Haven. Every member of the New London Society is welcome at these League meetings.

OUR HERBAL HERITAGE

Nearing that unknown land after a long stormy passage in the year 1630, John Winthrop wrote in his Journal, "And there came a smell off shore like the smell of a Garden."

What cheer that fragrance must have brought to those courageous pilgrims who had left their homeland, bringing precious seeds and plants to the New World.

In those days, nothing was available except the things that had been brought with them, unless it was made by their own hands, grown from their own stocks or brought by the next boat many months later.

That "off shore smell" might well have been any of those herbs which Samson Occum writes about in his homely little herbal.

Samson Occum was a Mohegan Indian, the first Indian minister to be ordained in New England. Born in Uncasville, he went to England in 1766 with the Reverend Eleazer Wheelock of Columbia, Connecticut, to raise funds for the education of "ye native savages of North America." He returned with a fund of \$30,000. which formed the nucleus of Dartmouth College.

Occum's "Herbs and Roots" is a rare little tome and one of the gifts which is a treasured possession of the New London County Historical Society. Would that we had more of these manuscripts. The old time herbals are delightfully amusing, but there are contained therein many well-aimed pointers for good husbandry.

The Original Journal of the Reverend Samson Occum was found among other old papers at Mohegan, and it seems very meet and right for us to quote some of his wise words. "Elder bark thats green pounded and mixt with netes foot oil--good for burns." Another helpful hint tells us "Swamp Shoemake sap good for Warts" and there's "Burr Dock leaf, pounded and mixt with fat, Good for swelling."

OUR HERBAL HERITAGE (continued)

Long before the Pilgrims landed on these shores of the New World the Indians were using many of those native plants of ours that have a basis in sound medical practice today.

And so today we bow our heads with Samson Occum when he notes on "May ye 17th A.D. 1754" that "Ocus has now learnt me 52 roots and I have this day paid him in all 27 York money. God is the witness to my name."

-----Elsa Huntley

CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED TO RESTORE HEMPSTEAD HOUSE

It is more than fifty years since the Society published Joshua Hempstead's diary. This monumental work, which recorded in wonderful detail the life of the town in the 18th century, is now a collector's item. The Hempstead House, which housed many generations of the family, was an old dwelling when the Shaw Mansion was built in 1756. Now one of the 25 oldest houses in the state, it is receiving attention to safeguard it and to restore its true historical values.

A three-year program is planned by the Antiquarian and Landmarks Society to raise a sum of \$75,000., a total estimated to cover the costs of work on the house and improvements to its surroundings on Hempstead and Jay Streets.

Every resident of New London County loves the Hempstead House, whether he knows its historical background or simply enjoys the fragrance of its old-fashioned gardens. The House is a symbol of solid, simple living that somehow seems a thing of the past as we survey our streamlined noisy present day living. This little home island in the midst of city sounds merits the attention of every Society member. Some, perhaps, have talked about it with Miss Anna Hempstead Branch, the poet and last of the family to occupy the dwelling. All know of the loving care and vigilance of Miss Ruth W. Newcomb, a long-time friend of Miss Branch, and chairman of the Hempstead House Committee of the Antiquarian and Landmarks Society.

A committee has been appointed to campaign for the restoration of the Hempstead House. You are urged to contribute as generously as you can to preserve this landmark that speaks to us today as eloquently as ever of the American way of life.

NEW LONDON COUNTY PROJECT RECORDING EARLY PRINTING

From 1709 when Thomas Short came to New London until 1784, New London was the home of the official printers "to the governor and company" and therefore much of Connecticut's earliest printing was done here. Printing is said to have begun in Norwich in 1773, and there are later imprints recorded for Colchester, Franklin, Griswold, Groton, Lebanon, Ledyard, Lyme, Montville, Mystic, Mystic Bridge, Niantic, North Stonington, Preston, Stonington, Stonington-Port and Waterford.

Because of the increasing importance and value of these early imprints, and because locations of many of the publications were recorded some years ago, a group of libraries and historical societies in New London County became interested in a union catalog of the local imprints now available within the County. The project has grown and we are now attempting to record all the publications issued here, and to report as many of their locations as possible.

Bibliographies already compiled are very valuable in this work. In 1900 Mr. A. C. Bates compiled A Bibliographical List of Editions of Connecticut Laws From the Earliest Issues to 1836. In 1904 Mr. James Hammond Trumbull's List of Books Printed in Connecticut, 1709-1800 was published, and two supplements to this work compiled by Mr. Bates appeared in 1938 and 1947. The Checklist of Connecticut Almanacs, 1709-1850 also compiled by Mr. Bates was published by the American Antiquarian Society in 1914. Two great American bibliographies by Evans and Sabin also record many early publications issued in this County.

Recently the Library of Congress has generously allowed us access to the files of the American Imprints Inventory. Using both these files and the bibliographies

**NEW LONDON COUNTY PROJECT
RECORDING EARLY PRINTING (continued)**

listed above (and others), we continue to try to complete the recording in so far as possible. It has been very impressive to learn how many New London County imprints have been gathered together for the Library of Congress, the Huntington Library in California, the Clemens Library in Ann Arbor, Michigan, the Princeton and Union Theological Seminaries, and the New York Public Library, as well as many of the great libraries in New England.

As the work progresses we hope to be able to visit and work in many libraries and historical societies, a number of which have already been most generous in allowing us to examine unique and rare copies of these early works.

---Hazel A. Johnson, Librarian
Connecticut College Library

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